

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Watching bats thrive in Dillsboro

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

A pair of biologists sat patiently beside the Tuckasegee River, staring at a set of wooden boxes mounted on a wooden pole on the rivers' bank, waiting for the sun to go down.

With enough darkness, bats started dropping out of the boxes to begin their nightly feeding on insects near the river.

It has been more than two years since the Dillsboro Dam, on the Tuckasegee River, was removed, and everything indicates the removal has been positive for the river as native fish and other aquatic animals are expanding into habitat previously cut off to them and using areas previously unusable.

However, what happens in the river is only part of the story of the dam's removal. The dam also had a powerhouse that was flooded and rendered inoperable in the 2004 floods. Despite not being able to generate electricity, the powerhouse became an important summer roosting site for bats. When the dam was demolished, the powerhouse came down too, leaving hundreds, if not thousands of bats homeless.

Where were those bats to go? In order to address the impacts to the bats from the powerhouse demolition, Duke Energy constructs a series of bat boxes along the Tuckasegee River in the vicinity of the powerhouse site. For the past four years, biologists have monitored bat use of the boxes, going out three times a year to count how many bats come out at dusk, and the results have been impressive. It seems with the demolition of the powerhouse, the bats have readily taken to the bat houses.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.